

KINDLING;

OR,

A WAY TO DO IT.

BY A SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHER.

“WORK IS PRAYER.”

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE object of issuing this pamphlet, in anticipation of the book of which it forms a part, is twofold: *First*, To put Superintendents and Teachers in possession of the suggestions in regard to Teachers' Meetings; and *Second*, To advertise the book. The author desires its circulation, because by it he hopes to promote a cause that lies near his heart. Should there be any profit on the sale of the book, it will be sacredly devoted to the Sabbath School interest. As its title-page indicates, the book will be designed to aid the conductors of all religious meetings, particularly those in connection with the institution of the Sabbath School. That the design of the work may be clearly apprehended, a single chapter is annexed (see Teachers' Meeting), with a brief allusion to the contents of each chapter, and a few suggestions on the self-culture of a Sabbath School Teacher, which may indicate the spirit that will pervade the volume.

The eagerness with which Superintendents inquire into the different methods of conducting the various sessions of the school, is accepted as evidence that there is a want of such a book; and, however valuable have been the hints from other quarters, it is hoped, with some at least, who may not have had access to the best usages, the work may not be without some profit. It should here, perhaps, be distinctly stated that it is neither the design nor the desire to produce uniformity or to check invention, but simply to aid those who have not already discovered a better way. If, then, upon the perusal of these pages, superintendents, parents, teachers, or Christians interested in religious meetings, see in the plan proposed any fitness to "kindle" the slumbering energies of the mass of professors, and energize in every heart those spiritual forces, every where felt to be needed, they will inquire for the book when it makes its appearance, or order it in advance, by addressing "*Manual, New York*," by mail, which may hasten its publication. The retail price of the book will be about 75 cents; and those who send for 10 or more copies will receive it at the wholesale price.

SYNOPSIS OF THE BOOK.



CHAPTER I.

Will be prefatory, and chiefly designed to set forth the adaptation of the Sabbath School system to all places and almost all persons, and their proper relation to it as an institution designed to bring revealed truth into contact with every individual.

CHAPTER II.

Will give the most prominent features of the Gospel system, show the aggressive attitude in which they are presented in the Bible, with some description of the method by which truth may seek to vanquish error.

CHAPTER III.

Will give a description of the field, as the world now presents it to the eye of the Christian, the present aspect of its moral geography, and the first impulses of the heart to put forth individual and organic effort for its recovery from the ravages of sin.

CHAPTER IV.

TEACHERS' MEETING (which see p. 7).

CHAPTER V.

SESSIONS.

SECTION 1.—Reasons for two sessions.

SECTION 2.—This will describe the reflections of a Teacher on the way to the school-room; the manner of opening, continuing, and closing the first session of the school, together with a brief enumeration of the duties of the Superintendent, Secretary, and Teachers, in the progress of the school.

SECTION 3 will contain a plan or routine of exercises for the Infant Class, and the spirit with which it should be conducted.

SECTION 4 will describe the afternoon session, with its routine of exercises, and the relation of one Sabbath School to another, and to other Christian institutions.

CHAPTER VI.

CONCERTS.

SECTION 1.—The Design and Method of conducting a Monthly Meeting of Parents, Teachers, and Scholars.

SECTION 2.—An allusion to the ordinary Monthly Concert for Foreign Missions.

SECTION 3.—The Missionary Concert, or meeting of an individual school, with a description of the mode of conducting it, and the character of the matter to be selected and brought before it.

SECTION 4.—Union Concert, in which various denominations may unite, under a plan of union, design of the meeting, and mode of conducting it; with a vindication of the Union principle.

CHAPTER VII.

SELF-CULTURE (which see p. 20).

CHAPTER VIII.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD SUPERINTENDENT, TEACHER, AND SCHOLAR.

CHAPTER IX.

ELECTIONS.

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CHAPTER X.

SINGING.

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SECTION 1.—Religious Parents.

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CHAPTER XV.

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Spirit with which the foregoing Labors are to be performed; Specialty and individuality of the Holy Ghost in comforting, guiding, supporting, and conducting these labors to a successful issue.

[This is not designed as a complete Analysis of the Chapters, but only as an outline of the contents of the book, which is intended as a MANUAL to aid in conducting Sabbath Schools and Religious Meetings.]

CHAPTER IV.

TEACHERS' MEETING.

GLANCING through the history of the past, the most prominent objects that catch and fix our attention are the camps and the courts of nations. Other objects are presented by the tongue of the orator, or the pen of the scribe, only as correlative and subordinate. The inventions of genius, the wisdom of philosophers, and the counsel of sages, according to the popular estimate of all ages, have had little to do hitherto in guiding the physical forces of society. Slow, indeed, has been, and still is, our progress; but yet, are there not some indications that we are approaching an era that shall inaugurate other forces? Though the sulphuric clouds of war still linger here and there, and newspaper editors professing Christianity are not wanting to taunt and goad to national slaughter, and governments are found sufficiently chivalric and savage, with the aid of alcohol, to keep watch for an occasion to let loose gunpowder and deadly weapons, and the kennel of war-dogs, at their mercenary bidding; yet the forces of Christianity are making progress. Scarcely is there a national sin, but there is now some weapon already forged, or some armory erecting to bring it forth, ere long to glitter in the hands of the spiritual host. Surely the world cannot much longer fail to discern the supreme power for good that there was in that "upper chamber," where twelve men were permitted to look out upon a world already prophetically conquered by the power of truth. True they did not, they might not, anticipate the long time that treachery and supineness would defer

the conquest ; hence the earnest manner in which they undertook their work. Had some sparks of their zeal kindled a flame of equal intensity along the line of revolving centuries, what would have been the present condition of our world ? But there is a rekindling in other "chambers." The power of truth is beginning to be felt anew. Within less than eighty years, is it too much to say that the Sabbath School has more than duplicated that power ; nay, increased it many fold ? When it shall be again redoubled, again and again, we may then begin to estimate. As yet, we have no arithmetic to calculate these forces. We only propose to increase them until the light shall be sufficiently augmented to see both the past and present darkness, and then possibly will the world be aroused to consistent action. The idea we here wish most to lodge in the mind of the thoughtful Christian, not to say the philanthropist, is this : that the force that is to benefit this world is not a gunpowder force. Common as *thinking* is, it is this that is the basis of hope for the future. Cheap as *talking* is, it is this that has done and that will do all the real good in the world. The benefactors of the race have not been Alexanders, Napoleons, nor even Washingtons ; for what could the latter have done without a moral force to wield ? It was this that gave us all the victory we have worth retaining. The generals of humanity have not been epauletted or commissioned from earthly powers, nor will they ever be. Galileo and Newton, Faust, Fulton, Arkwright, Watt and Whitney, Martin Luther, Whitefield and Robert Raikes—these, and others like them, are the men to whom the world owes its progress. Justinian, Cromwell, Milton, Locke, Bacon, Matthew Hale, our own Franklin, and their compeers, are our real rulers. The governor of this Republic is more *intrinsically* the Sabbath School Teacher, who drops a word of truth that shapes the moral life and development of the child, than any senator that ever commanded the vote of Congress.

From this stand-point we are able to see that the Teachers' Meeting is the most important legislative hall in our republic. If the palladium of our liberty can be demonstrated

to be the primary political meeting, it can be a thousand-fold more clearly demonstrated to the man who has a moral eye to see it, that the primary political meeting stands or falls upon the moral character of its constituents. It is in this point of view, dear Teacher, that we must invite you to your weekly meeting. It is for the relation between cause and effect that we thus earnestly urge your attendance here, as an indispensable pre-requisite to your qualification to enter the Sabbath School room. The little community of the Sabbath School, so full of indispensable moral forces, so big and hourly swelling with the most important results, is your spiritual arsenal. Here are you to obtain your weapons, with which to go forth to battle. Unless you can come here, you cannot know the Teachers of the school. You may, indeed, strike now and then a random blow ; but you cannot manœuvre with the rest of the army. You can only know your place by learning it here. True, your fight may be a personal one ; but the field can never be intelligently surveyed, and all your plans judiciously laid, without the manifold blessings of this meeting. Here, you must not only study your books, but mature your graces. Here, you must kindle anew your love and enthusiasm ; here catch a glance of the road you are to travel, and of the objects of interest by the way ; amid the confidence and love of your associates give and receive the cheers of hope and courage. Yes, and here anticipate the day of final rejoicing, when, at the end of the fierce conflict, you may be permitted, under the shade of the tree of life, on the banks of the river of God, to review with those whom you have won to Christ, the mysterious way in which you have come to such glories. And then will you strike your harp with a more rapturous hand, as you sing with them the new song of Moses and the Lamb.

For the character of the Teachers' Meeting, the Superintendent is to hold himself responsible. Except the "Great Sabbath School Teacher of the Congregation," no one in the whole range of religious organizations occupies a post of more important trust, or more extensive usefulness. There is no versatility of talent, no amount of learning, but may be employed

here to the best advantage. The school is, in a high and important sense, dependent upon his skill in obtaining Teachers,* and attaching them to it ; in educating them for the proper discharge of their duties ; and in the general drift and conduct of its sessions. For accomplishing these results, the Teachers' Meeting places in his hands all the instruments. Here, more than any where else, will he learn how to adapt all the powers of his mind to the development of each Teacher ; and here he will observe their fitness for the several trusts he assigns to them. To do this in no offensive manner, will require much study. His present reward is, the love and approbation of a precious band of believers, being trained, and in turn training others, for a Teachers' Meeting in heaven that shall never break up. The truths studied here are for review and for study as the theses of everlasting thought, thanksgiving, and praise. High as we place this standard, Christian brother, do not hesitate, if fairly called, to assume this office, and covet these best gifts. You have a right to expect, and doubtless will receive, that charity, which the franchise of a Christian vote more than guarantees. As has already been more than hinted, this meeting is for the building of a spiritual edifice, in which the Superintendent may be considered as the architect, the Teachers the workmen ; the materials to be quarried from the surrounding neighborhood. As our system is an educational one, throughout, it is necessary to keep every part advancing step by step, to higher attainment. After a school

* If the Superintendent is not, himself, a member of the Session, Committee, or other official board, having charge of receiving members, he should be in weekly correspondence with some one who is. He should procure the names and residence of those recently admitted, and immediately call upon them, and persuade them to occupy some post of usefulness in the Sabbath School. This, it will be perceived, is a favorable time, on many accounts, for such an undertaking. This duty, successfully performed, will prevent that standing complaint, "We are in want of teachers." This method is needful also to prevent, on the part of new members, the complaint that they are not acquainted. But who would covet the acquaintance of an inactive Christian, unless disabled by age or sickness ? This duty, indeed, should be superseded by the voluntary offer of these individuals ; but the millennium has not yet dawned. We are only trying to lead each other in a darkness, which we hope and pray may but shortly precede it.

is well organized, and a proper place ascertained for every thing, it will not be necessary for the Superintendent personally to be the chairman or conductor of these meetings. To allow the Teachers, in turn, to take charge of the meeting, will exercise their gifts and give them great confidence, without detracting from the general interest of the meeting, if other hints and rules are fully observed.

We would not here repress the spontaneous emotions of Christian fellowship, always enkindled at such gatherings. Yet, tempting as conversation now is, if the minute has arrived for opening the meeting, all conversation should cease instantly. All through the meeting, the "unruly member" must be kept in check, except for the edification of all. Every one has brought a contribution to the feast ; but every one may carry away much more than he has brought, by carefully gleaning a little from every word that is spoken in the class. The Chairman, therefore, should repress the first whisper that does not relate to the subject under consideration, as disorderly. He must also see to it, that, in limiting his questions to any printed book, or the business to any fixed forms, he does not render the answering or reporting so purely mechanical as not to keep up a wakeful interest. The object should be to keep the faculties of every one in profitable occupation, so that, when the meeting shall close, all will be glad to have another just like it "*now*." Little indulgences will prevent this feeling, and when the time for another meeting shall arrive, it will be found that these very indulgences are a reason why you do not feel it to be very important to be punctually on hand. Sometimes the punctiliousness we insist upon will provoke your smile ; but we hope not your patience, much less your temper. You must constantly bear in mind that you are "builders" in a spiritual temple. The common idea that a Sabbath School is made up of little things is a false one. Here, there are no little things. Every touch of your finger, every exhalation of your breath, is like the invisible ink, engraving letters on the polished tablet of the mind and heart, now indeed legible to God alone, but soon to blaze with significant meaning in the eyes of men and angels. These superscriptions are soon again

to be written on the interior being of your pupils, and become eternized there, to the glory or shame of your teaching and their improvement of it. Surely, nothing in this relation can be said to be little. But we must onward to "a way to do it."

When the hour of meeting arrives, even if there is but one Teacher present, the Chairman should commence the meeting by singing a hymn ; or, if unable to sing,* he may read a hymn, and proceed systematically and good-naturedly through all the exercises, to the close of the meeting. If, for a few evenings, he thus labors and prays for the success of the school, he will be heard, especially if he has one or two with him, to bring him within the chartered rights secured by Christ's promises. If but few are present at the opening, it will then do to read aloud all you intend to sing of a hymn ; but if all are present, no *time* should be taken to read more than one verse, and the sentiment of the hymn should be left first to strike the ear in the harmony of sound. Rarely should more than two or three verses of a hymn be sung, lest instead of the feeling being intensified, much of it should be lost in senseless sound. Watch nothing so closely as mere formal proceedings of any kind. These will not only waste your time, but enervate your spirit. Immediately after the hymn, a short prayer should follow, for the object immediately before you, asking for no blessings of which the need is not felt. No male Teacher, if a professor, should be excused from this service, and the Superintendent should frown out of the very presence of the school all criticism, as a daring intrusion of the enemy of all righteousness.

The meeting being opened, the Secretary (who should be competent to keep them) should then read in a loud, clear voice, the minutes of the previous meeting. These minutes should not fail to notice *every thing* which was done, and in such a way as to reproduce the good effect of it, so that, in spirit, if possible, every meeting shall begin at a point of interest

* If possible to avoid it, this should never be the case ; for singing is an almost indispensable requisite for a Superintendent. However, this defect may in part, be remedied, by securing the attendance of a good singer, who can be always relied upon for taking the lead in this exercise.

where the previous closed. No practice can be more necessary to the meeting or more profitable to all the Teachers. On this alone very much depends ; for the interest of the meeting, and through it the school, must be kept historically progressive. These minutes should be read from materials carefully observed, and noted on a loose piece of paper, at each meeting, and as soon as read, if correct, should be approved by a regular motion, promptly seconded, and voted on in a loud and distinct voice, by every person in the room, male and female. A voice that is silent, will lose to its owner a great interest by refusing to say simply Aye or No. The Chairman, who lets any question pass without being voted upon by every one in the room, does the meeting an injustice, and the cause of the school a damage.

There is no question connected with a Sabbath School, or any spiritual interest, that is trifling. But perhaps the Chairman or Teachers may say it is too obviously right or wrong to require the formality of a vote. This is the only place where *form* is not *formality*. Here no two questions take precisely the same track, and every one will receive a compound interest by being moved regularly and voted upon spiritedly and distinctly. If any Teacher insists upon silence, it would be proper to determine by vote whether he or she should be excused for the reason offered. The Chairman or Superintendent should always keep every question, however plain or intricate, in a perfectly parliamentary shape before the meeting. This is not only for the interest of the meeting, but it will in the end save a vast amount of time, confusion, indifference, and final habits of carelessness, which would place in jeopardy any institution in the land, great or small.

In an enterprising, active, aggressive school, many things will here press upon the recollection of Superintendent and Teachers, and prompt suggestions, which will immediately kindle into a general flame. Every thing that can benefit or encourage the Superintendent or Teachers, or profit the district to which any Teacher belongs, or any individual in it, may properly receive attention at this time. But care must be taken by the Chair to prevent the loss of an instant of time.

A Teacher must not feel injured, although the Chairman should suddenly and even abruptly interrupt him or request him to condense his statement. This, kindly received, will do much for the profit of all present, whose time is precious ; all will learn from it the necessity of rapid motion ; and subsequent hurry and want of time will be avoided.

The Moderator should keep *dispatch* so constantly in mind, that, if it were possible, all that concerns the soul's interests, for time and eternity, should be crowded into the first half hour of the meeting. This extravagant expression would find no justification, but in the design to effectually rebuke a practice of consuming the first half of every religious meeting in prosy formal proceedings. To remedy this evil, so provokingly obnoxious, most important matters are hurried over, amid general confusion, or omitted altogether ; and with a stolidity and wickedness, that, in worldly matters, would be considered unpardonable. Great merit is often claimed for closing a meeting " promptly," just where it should be begun, the time having been stupidly squandered. The miscellaneous business being properly done up, with all possible force and perspicuity, taking care that every thing is so left as to bring out future results, the Chairman should first declare the number of Teachers that belong to the school, state the number present on the previous Sabbath, and in case of absence, the cause, in a becoming manner ; and then proceed to hear the reports of Teachers as to the condition of their classes, and attendance on the previous Sabbath. This questioning should always proceed regularly round the room with the sun (varying always for a reason), and the questions and answers should run thus :

QUEST. How many scholars have you, Mr. A — ?

ANS. Six ; two absent, four present ; visited or not ; cause of absence stated.

QUEST. Any evidence of extraordinary interest, or any thing to communicate ?

Here the Teacher will bring in rapid review the district assigned him for general visitation. This is entirely distinct from the visits to absent scholars, or those families from

which his pupils come. (See plan developed, when the book appears.) If families visited are in want of temporal or spiritual aid, which the Teacher cannot render, provision should here be made for them. Any object of interest described in this visitation, any experiences that may profit others, should here be distinctly stated. Arguments answered, difficulties overcome, and the way of doing it briefly stated, will give a missionary character to the meeting, without which the whole thing will sag into irretrievable monotony. When your meeting and your school fail to come into co-operative and active sympathy with the temporal and spiritual condition of outside humanity, then and there begins a spiritual decay, which will soon render your school an irksome place, if not an empty one, and finally result in the surrender of the commission you receive from your Master to "*go and preach the Gospel to every creature.*"

Ladies particularly should answer in a distinct tone of voice, that all may hear, and even arrest attention, if it should be wandering.

This completed, and a word added by the Superintendent, stating the spiritual condition of the school so far as derived from a general observation, the lesson may be taken up. The Teachers, who complain most that the lesson is not reached soon enough, will be found to be those who care least for the general interest of the school, and are least of all anxious to go before their classes with a quickening from the word and Spirit of God.

The lesson should now be taken up as the climax to all the previous proceedings. The edifice being erected, the presiding spirit must now take possession and fill it. The questioning should proceed regularly round the room, from left to right. Every one may profitably have in hand a volume of Union Questions; but great caution is necessary, lest these question books render the proceedings mechanical, and do injury rather than good. Helps these question books doubtless are to all; but to an unintelligent Teacher, they may do much to enervate the mind, if not to injure the spirituality of the learner. We would avoid any confinement to them, much more any

limitation, that would not permit a fresh and free questioning from the Chair to every Teacher, and *vice versa*. Simple and easy questions may be often asked, not only for edification, but to preserve the completeness of the subject, and to place the Teacher in the attitude of a child.

The watchful Chairman will often detect little blemishes or leaks in the Teachers' Meeting, which it will tax his utmost ingenuity to prevent. Sometimes considerable time is lost while a Teacher is finding a passage of Scripture referred to in the question book. If there are many references in a lesson, he may request the Teachers to find them in order, each taking one, from left to right, until the whole are found, and when the time arrives for them they are ready. We pass so many gates in life, that our journey will be much impeded, unless we have the fee in hand before we stop the carriage. But it would be much better, as will be the case in all good schools, if the lessons were so thoroughly studied that all the questions could be promptly answered, and the subject perfectly canvassed, from memory, without turning to the references at all. Better yet, if all books were left at home, and every thing relating to the lesson so completely in the memory as to have no need of them. We have heard of a Teachers' Meeting, in which the interest was increased many fold by the adoption of this measure.

The Chair should strive to make every subject luminous, and enrich it with research and his own experience. There should also emanate from the consideration of every truth, a felt obligation to make it known to others, and "a way to do it." Often dilute, as well as season it, for it is generally lambs you are feeding. Pains should also be taken to keep in mind the preciousness of Gospel truth, as well as its obligations. Some one has said that Americans feel the *obligations* of the Gospel, but European Christians, the *love* and *privileges* of it. Neither should be forgotten or unfelt. Here the full-orbed blaze of a spiritual illumination should so fill the place, as evermore to constitute the Teachers' Meeting a mount of transfiguration. To dwell upon manner and method here, would be rather cramping invention than aiding

imagination. So full and so free should be the mutual interchange of sentiment, that, in such a meeting, it would be impossible to repress the rising emotions of love to God and one another, as the Word of Life is here contemplated. Nowhere else on this earth is there such an opportunity to catch fire from the sparks that may fall from off the altar of heaven. Nowhere else could we hope that the flame of love would burn so intensely, as while here under its very central meridian. The icy pillars that sustain systems of sin and selfishness must here melt away. The crustations of sectarian Christianity will here become brittle, and consume like wax in a furnace. When a Teachers' Meeting is kindled into such a glow, any thing short of the immediate conversion of the pupils will be impatiently considered. Anecdote, sacred geography, Jewish customs, evidences of the inspiration of the Scriptures, internal and external, together with Christian theology, and all forms of false religion, may here be brought under review. But these are but dust, chaff, and scaffolding to the edifice. How to bring the renewing power of the Holy Ghost into contact with the pupil's heart, is the subject of every lesson, the theme that inspires every stage of the investigation. The wisest student of science, or of moral or mental philosophy, is to hold all his acquirements tributary to this one end—the conversion of the pupil. The Teachers' Meeting that does not beget this desire, fails of the end of its appointment. The investigations of the lesson, then, should all be conducted with this one paramount object.

The meeting should be closed with singing one or two verses, and prayer, short, fervent, always effective and prevalent. In proportion to its brevity, and not in proportion to its length, will this become the real, but never the formal fellowship of saints on earth, and like to that above.

The Teachers' Meeting will inevitably dissipate the gloom that habitually lowers upon the countenances of some good sort of people. Neither the cold austerities of the ascetic nor the idiotic formalities of the monk's cell can gain entrance here. Often, indeed, the subject under consideration will make it a most solemn place ; but these will be but

clouds intercepting a perpetual sunshine, only to water and refresh the budding graces in every heart. The smile, nay, the laugh, here, is the gush of the soul, the overflowing of a joy the worldling cannot mimic, for he is a stranger to the sweetness of this heavenly manna.

Sweetened as Teachers' Meetings often are, and should always be, with such heavenly influences, it is sometimes the case that this very joyfulness is swallowed up by a social interview that succeeds such a meeting. The social feeling of the family relation and that of Christians to one another may easily be conceived to be the dearest on earth. This may properly be admitted into any Christian circle, but to none with more propriety than where many are so intimately related in the same organization. But when the social supersedes the spiritual, or is felt to be absorbing so much of it as to endanger the ever increasing predominance of the latter, it should be checked, and the Superintendent should see to it that every Teachers' Meeting is becomingly dispersed, at a proper hour.

As to the time and place of holding a Teachers' Meeting, it will be safe to leave them to a vote of the teachers, who are most competent to judge of them, with the simple observation that they should not be rendered transitory, by being held less than a month in one place ; and that, when the social principle is wanting in a school, the parlor rather than the school or committee room is much more favorable for its introduction. Alternations from the one to the other, when circumstances favor, may preserve a golden mean.

Before dismissing this subject, we should not fail to suggest that, while the Superintendent is always to be held responsible for the entire conduct of this meeting, he should not fail to keep in mind that this is a school for the education of his Teachers, from which there is no graduation but to a pulpit. It is to be hoped that the minister will be always present, if possible, (especially if he possesses a faculty for enlivening rather than repressing the meeting.) The Superintendent, however, should ever be the presiding genius, though not its ruling officer. His seat should be at the right hand

of the Chairman, who should be a Teacher educating himself by striving to learn experimentally how to conduct a meeting well. Four successive meetings, if he has any tact, will enable him to keep familiar with the routine of the school, without becoming monotonous to his fellows. The Secretary should be at the left hand of the Chair, always ready to supply any material or statistical facts.

We linger upon this theme, where we could delight to remain, only to add, what we fear is a needless precaution, that this meeting should refuse admission to those who are not Teachers, whenever they are felt to embarrass the proceedings so as to defeat any of the designs of the meeting ; which would be the case, if any of the proceedings should take the phase of formality. This meeting may be so widely diversified by the spirit and ingenuity of the Chairman, Superintendent, and Teachers, as to meet the largest demand of a hungry and thirsting soul. Once a month, or oftener, under increasing influences of the Holy Ghost, the whole meeting may be occupied with devotions and experiences. Meantime, the Teachers may depend alone upon their private study of the lesson. (See *Self Culture*, No. 14.) By experiences we mean every variety of success in teaching and visiting, in the district allotted him, or among his own pupils, and every phase of religious experience. Often should the conversation of a Teacher with his class, or any persons visited, be detailed, if such conversation may be made available by his fellow Teachers. This religious experience, of *one*, all have a right to know. This is the end of a conference meeting. Especially here should Sabbath School spiritual experience be often told. The writer remembers, with heartfelt emotions, a meeting of this kind, when all were called upon to relate the circumstances of their conversion. There were present in a school but recently organized, forty or fifty Teachers, most of whom had but just been converted. For want of Christian Teachers, and those of more experience, many of these had been induced to take classes in a school for the instruction of poor children. As the inquiry proceeded, a large proportion gave most interesting descriptions of the mother's prayers and influence developed and

brought out into renewed activity and energy in the Sabbath School room.*

CHAPTER VII.

SELF-CULTURE.

WHAT more humiliating evidence of the downward tendency of our nature does the world furnish, than in the slow proficiency the professed followers of Christ have made in the school of Christianity. How steadily have the lessons of the past poured their instructions upon the present only to be again and again learned and quickly forgotten. The fact that from the first announcement of the Gospel, the Christian Church has not been like the rising sun, is clear proof that religion is an exotic in our world, only preserved and continued in an unfavorable soil, by the dews and showers that gently fall upon it from its native clime. But for this, instead of looking back for our brightest exemplifications of spiritual light and life, even to the apostolic age, every generation would furnish higher and yet loftier examples of holiness and consecration, that would make every new page of our history increasingly luminous. The accumulated treasures of past knowledge and experience would have long since made the world effulgent in millennial glory. Every succeeding age should be an advance upon the previous ; every heroic example

* We can hardly repress our feelings at this point, even if we had the moral right to do so, in view of a fact which ought to have led the human instrument of it, to pursue the vocation there so signally owned and blessed of Heaven. Mr. K.— was then a young man, and had been preaching both in the upper and lower wards of the city of New York, with unequivocal evidence that his calling was that of an evangelist. Eight of this little gathering (if the writer remembers correctly) had heard the preacher in four or five different churches, and in as many different sermons, urge the immediate obligations of repentance, and attributed their conversion to this cause. As they named the text, the course of remark, recollecting their experience, now so precious, the subdued but joyful gushes of gratitude, electrified the meeting, and the very silence that ensued was as the rushing of a wind from heaven, a divided flame, whose *aureola* seemed to surround each of them. Acts 2 : 2, 3.

of the past should gradually recede in the excelsior of the present, and the song of triumph rise from every quarter of the globe, octave on octave, till it unite the choral harmonies of earth and heaven in one eternal anthem.

Fellow Teachers in the Sabbath School, we, in our turn, are to educate ourselves, as best we can, in the lessons of the past and present, to the end that we may educate the immediate generation to follow. To help each other in this most important of all earthly vocations is the design of the present chapter. Let us here premise that a few things will be taken for granted : First, That you regard God as the supreme object of your affections, and have made a full consecration of all you have and are to His service ; Second, That you consider this as no mere formality for any earthly end, and have made no mental reservation, that, God helping you, you will live up to your convictions, and your daily prayer shall be to know and do your duty, as a soldier now fully enlisted in the Christian army ; Third, That you regard your calling to be a Sabbath School Teacher as a professorship, to be studied and pursued with far more assiduity and zeal than would be justified in a calling to be a lawyer, a doctor, a merchant, or a mechanic. To qualify you for this pursuit every thing has to bend, and some things have to break ; Fourth, That, however poor have been your past acquirements, from this time onward you are to make the most of every faculty God has given you, to improve until He come ; that you intend to treat excuses which offer themselves as you do obtruding insects, and combat with every sinful passion and bad habit. And yet further, premising that you regard every misspent moment, every present lost opportunity, as increasing the probability of future failure and misfortune, we merely propose, in the brief hints which follow, to aid you in your own suggestions, which last must be relied upon as the source of future improvement.

1. Some of our strongest vices can only be attacked and conquered in single combat. Sometimes we shall have to continue the struggle for weeks or months. Such has been the tenacity with which some "right eye" indulgence has clung

to the soul, that reconsecration at the communion table, as in the presence of Christ now hanging on the cross, has been found the only expedient by which the subtle enemy could be dislodged.

2. Time, and some other sacrifices, will be found indispensable, however urgently or flatteringly the world may plead. System, however, will do much to redeem the time. No young person can regularly read twenty minutes each day, with attention, in a good book, well written, without becoming an educated man. Such a habit of daily improvement once contracted, we venture little in the prediction that his labors will be intelligently directed, and his usefulness extensively promoted. If time is thus limited, it must not be spent in reading periodicals of any kind, but books of history, science, or biography, well drawn up. Let every young Christian be thankful that so many of these are within his reach. Have the reading of but one book on hand at a time, especially if it be on the principles of science.

3. While employed, learn to think systematically on some subject, and not let the mind wander into dreaming listlessness. Caution here is success every where else. Indifference here insures a useless life.

4. Imagination, which lives in the universal, and almost makes us omnipresent, must fly from the touch of pollution, as the finger from the burning coal. Through this medium, intercourse with God, as a person, not a principle, should be but little less intimate than in the regular devotions of morning or evening.

5. As the first sign of natural life is natural action ; so the first indication of spiritual life should be spiritual action. As we burst the narrow limits of selfishness and pass into the realms of benevolence, creation will be clothed with a beauty we can for ever contemplate without satiety. Life can henceforth to us be no monotony. Every thought, nay, every atom, will have eternal relations.

6. In a course of self-culture, it would be difficult to tell whether the idea of wit or genius has not prevented more improvement than its real possession has ever supplied. In one,

the pretence that he has it not, is the panacea to a disturbed conscience and the end of argument. In another, the conceit of its possession forestalls application. And with all, self-love would persuade us of its lurking presence, but too often a self-indulgence suggests that this capricious virtue, called genius, seldom or never points to a self-denying course of life.

A true genius and real tact will steadily point to perseverance, not only as the parentage, but also the offspring of all success and usefulness. Perseverance is the genius that all may possess. By it "the leaf of the mulberry becomes satin." In it is the only guarantee of success in any department of education or calling of usefulness. So magical is her power, that, with her aid, the most impotent will succeed, when, without her, the most potent would fail.

7. The hurried confusion that marks the life of some useful men, mars the work, and limits the attainment that would be reached were nothing to be undertaken without due *preparation*. If you would secure comfort, happiness, or usefulness, it can only be done by thought beforehand of what you are about to undertake. This remark is alike applicable to sacred and secular engagements.

8. A frequent conviction that it is too late to begin, is first cousin to the thief procrastination. No matter how old, no matter how unfavorable the circumstances, present and future happiness, as well as usefulness, depend upon your beginning any and every system of personal improvement which it is desirable ever should have been begun.

9. Few conceive the vast amount of work they can perform if both the mind and body are kept in proper condition. It was the privilege of the all-accomplished Premier of England, Lord Brougham, to explode practically the old adage, that if we have too many irons in the fire some will burn, by a self-discipline that enabled him to say, when he had in "tongs, poker, and all," he never had so many as he wanted to keep himself employed. System, habit, and perseverance, are almost omnipotent instruments, with Heaven's blessing.

10. In the multitude of employments and the prosecution of business without distraction, there is a discipline of

the mind and an inspiration of self-reliance which nothing else can equal, if thoroughly and patiently pursued.

11. It might be safe to assert, that in no place does the Christian suffer so much from lost opportunities as in religious meetings, especially when they are not conducted with skill and dispatch. So far from spending an hour in a prayer meeting with profit, it may be safely assumed that here the hour may be worse than misspent. It may chill the soul, and crust it over with an impenetrable habit of indifference which it may require the strongest effort to break up. If excuse is sought in the cold formality of others, then it may be your first duty to seek to remove it. Often the canker will be found in our own spiritual sluggishness. Perhaps it may be said that there never was a prayer meeting at which it might not have been profitable for any one to attend. If, for want of objects of interest to speak of or pray for, the prayer meeting is dull to you, how loathsome must it be in the sight of Heaven ! But if it is not always possible for you to take with you some subject for conversation or object of prayer, may it not be possible for you to rise above the influences which surround you ? While here, you may hold spiritual communion with your Father in heaven. Here, too, you may bring before him the condition of this one or that one in whose case you are particularly interested. In another place we have spoken of the manner in which these meetings should be conducted. Scarcely does any one occasion in Christian experience call for such a girding up of the loins of the mind, in order to reap the greatest possible blessing from meetings where so much of the allotted time of the Christian is spent. Here broken resolutions may at least be repaired and renewed ; brotherly love may always be rekindled and jealousies smothered ; the realities of eternity summoned to impress you with the glories of heaven or the terrors of hell. Here, as from a hill in the pathway of life, you pause to see how far you have come, and how far you have yet to go in Christian experience before your faith becomes fruition. A weekly record will enable the young Christian to ascertain whether he is progressing or retrograding in his Christian

course—a vastly more important chart than was ever kept by ocean voyager. It is here the internal graces are furnished with much of the best nurture ; and here, you may make the first profession before man of your interest in Christ's kingdom. Among those who feel the same infirmities, you may open your mouth fearless of criticism, and practise the means of communicating your experience and exhortations that may make your whole life luminous. This should be the spiritual arsenal from which your armor shall go forth, reflecting a brilliancy given it in secret prayer, and with ammunition prepared upon your knees over the pages of inspired truth.

12. It might be as difficult to correct a habit of drowsiness superinduced by position in public prayer in church, as to describe the sinfulness of that indifference we are apt to feel. The habit of unfaltering attention, and of following the minister in this exercise, will be of vast advantage in cherishing the desires that should ever be glowing in the heart. Failure here is almost sure to be followed by a passivity and profitless inattention to the sermon and the songs of praise.

13. If no higher end were sought in the hearing of sermons than mental discipline for the purpose of self-education, here would be motive sufficient for the greatest wakefulness. But if you have chosen a competent teacher, you have in this simple provision the means of religious education. This, with a good degree of watchfulness and application, should preclude the excuse so often offered, that “I am not qualified to teach.” Should you be unable to secure any other means of improvement, this is capable of furnishing you with themes for thought, conversation, and instruction that, properly digested, will provide aliment for the entire man. In a Christian land where these ordinances are enjoyed, want of time and opportunity for any and every qualification for Christian usefulness, is an excuse to be given and received with suspicion of a disposition to neglect the improvement of one talent because five or ten are not given. To state how this may be done, would be taking time and space not

now at command ; for, less than the exercise of every faculty of the mind might be insufficient to show how great use might be made of these discourses. They are often heard as though all piety consisted in being at the place where they are delivered, or, as though there were no meaning in them ; for, even when praised most, they are most powerless for working out results.

14. Any theory of self-culture that omits just that weekly or rather daily critical examination of the Bible, which a preparation for the Teachers' Meeting and the class requires, is radically defective, and can only affect the mind and manners, without refining the heart. The best study of the lesson, by comparing Scripture with Scripture, educates all the faculties, and all the graces, at the same time. No one was ever known to do this, for any length of time, without becoming truly wise. If you have risen above the childish habitude of thought, or feeling, that you may recollect once arrested your eye, if not aroused your aversion, as you glanced at the old-fashioned volume, and bethought the familiar but distasteful phrase, the old Saxon idiom and old age adaptations, you are prepared now for the study of those truths that have kindled the brightest genius that ever adorned your race. The lawyer and the scholar, the philosopher and the poet, not less than the saint, have humbled themselves to learn their highest lessons of wisdom here. Your research, also, among commentators and annotators, brings you in constant communion with the best heads and hearts that adorn the page of history. Infidels and seepies, who have made any progress in real learning, have been obliged to meet such men as Chalmers and Butler on this ground, and suffer an ignominious defeat. The disciples of Hume, Voltaire, Rousseau and Paine, with the spiritual infidels of our times, who have tried to vent the corrupt opposition of the human heart to God and his word, by false theories of reason and philosophy, have fallen here before less gifted intellects, wielding only the weapons of divine truth. The Sabbath School system is to raise the body politic to the level of these moral teachers and philosophers, unless its friends prove recreant to their privileges.

It was the gifted Chalmers who said his Sabbath School labors were a source of more consolation to him, because more resultful, than any of his brilliant achievements.

Our limits forbid the attempt to set forth any theory of learning or teaching ; but, in another place, we have referred to some books, which no Teacher should fail carefully to peruse. If you have not time and opportunity for this, the Bible itself is sufficient for all. This is the chisel with which you are to sculpture, not a marble, which may delight the eye for a few generations, but which the summer suns and winter blasts would soon deface and destroy ; but every stroke on the moral statue of your pupil leaves an indentation that is co-existent with his being. Not man, with his fallible standard of criticism, is to be the spectator, but angels and God himself. The tooth of time is not to destroy this monument of your skill, but generations, rolling on the slow cycles of eternity, are the critics that will judge of your success in this school of immortal arts. Will you not study hard ? Will you not strike softly and carefully on this yielding but hardening sensibility that is receiving every stroke of your instrument, however slight, with a response that echoes back a note of alarm from the caverns of hell, or sweetly reverberates along the sequestered retreats of the paradise above ?

Pursued as this work of home preparation should be, in connection with the Teachers' Meeting, this concentration of private and social study and reflection is to create a moral heat that shall fuse the parts into a consistent whole. Thus the Teachers' Meeting is not only the *Normal School* that is to educate the Teacher for his class,* but the very embodiment of a Christian fellowship and sympathy, at once his demand and supply, for present life and future hope of usefulness and happiness here and hereafter.

15. If you are located where you have opportunity of hearing lectures, try to find time for some systematic reading

* Viewed in this light, it will appear equally important, whether the Teacher has a class of Bible readers or not, that he should take part in the Bible lesson at the Teachers' Meeting. This will be the same thing to him as if he had remained in the "*Bible Class*" instead of becoming a Teacher.

upon the subjects treated of, and then you will be able to profit much by what would otherwise give you but a superficial view. Should you not be able to command time for this, it will help you much in your preparation for teaching a Sabbath School class, and being generally useful to the school, to remember and repeat by yourself what you have read, or what you have heard in public. This will deepen the impression upon your mind, and if attention is paid to the manner of repeating it, will finally do for you what a teacher in elocution might fail to do, had you both time and money to pay for such instruction.

16. It is not the mere moments, which are said to be the "golden sands of time," that may thus be rescued and made to accomplish by far the most important ends of life ; but most fortunate is the person, who has not, in the course of the year, some days of partial indisposition, when some medicine for the mind, through these ministrations, will do much to make the sick room cheerful, and rather relieve than oppress the physical powers. Try it, as an agreeable "salad to the solitary," to intermix with profitable meditation.

17. While modern improvements have destroyed both the pleasure and the profit of travelling, the car, the steamboat, and the public house, with some insuperable inconveniences may be converted into the study, and thus overruled to the great ends of life, both by thinking systematically and reading methodically. Shorn, as travelling is, of many great advantages, there are yet a thousand ways to make it talk, teach, and preach.

18. If any minutes can be gleaned from the pressing duties of life, and the immediate demand of those cares which will bear this dignified appellation, our social relations should be the first to claim attention. The evening would seem to invite to cheerful conversation, which should always be made to strengthen the mind, the body, and every virtue, by that agreeable exercise, properly limited to the drawing-room, and the social circle. This is the finishing or polishing room, where the mere castings may glow with peculiar excellence,

if the natural development is not made to assume or affect a fictitious character.

19. The study of character, the most important study of man, is a science that may be prosecuted in any and every condition of life ; and a moment's contact may suggest a history of improvement. *Attention* and *Reflection* are the ministers in this school-room of the world. *Self-application* is the Schoolmaster, through the whole course.

20. Have you a companion ? Know him well. Is he a clerk or fellow-apprentice ? Insensibly instruct him, as you expect your lessons of wisdom from him. Is he a fellow-student ? Walk together "the ambrosial way." In youth, get your lessons for old age to repeat, else, a freezing conservatism will be the result of disappointed hopes. At whatever age you die, resolve to die young. "The child shall die a hundred years old."

21. In the work of self-education, consider that you have not left the primary department until you can bear opprobrious epithets without emotion, and insult, with pity.

22. Susceptibility to flattery is the most fatal snare that lies in the pathway to improvement. By it omnipotent grace is potently defied. It is the gangrene of corruption within, as well as the impenetrable shield against the armor of conviction from without. Flattery is the bane of genius, the Baal and Ashtaroth of Idolatry, the hope of despair, the offspring of earth, the atmosphere of hell—Humility, its antithesis and antidote.

23. In carrying forward any successful system of self-improvement, little advance will be made if you have not courage to act where success is doubtful. Courage should be an ever present friend, inducing us to *take the risk*, ambitious to rectify if mistaken, preventing self-reproach for mistakes, which show that you did not know any better, and guarding against the fear of lost honor or reputation, and the humbling of your pride under opprobrious epithets of persons or principles that claim our approval.

24. Poverty and wealth, prosperity and adversity, are only relative phrases, signifying different conditions of self-educational

tion. They are, however, almost always perverted, and made to say, "the time and the circumstances are not yet." The pupil in the school of Christ, should no more require hints for his improvement than the pupil in the pleasures of the world.

25. The first, the last, the only foe that will not yield to discipline, is selfishness. Every symptom must be watched, but the prescription must be aimed at the disease.

26. It will require even more patience to unlearn our faults than to inaugurate excellences. But in this school we require an enemy for a tutor.

27. God's theory of development, in all the laws that are known to govern this mundane system, involves in every step the process of carrying forward to every new manifestation the aggregate of the previous. Such should be the theory of the self-instructor, and his success will be always in a compound ratio.

28. History, chronologically read, Biography, self-applied, and Poetry studied as the grace and ornament of both thought and affection, will insure a welcome reception to every desirable school of improvement, refinement, and enjoyment.

29. Reflection is to the mind what digestion is to the body. Let it be regularly furnished with a wholesome aliment, and always directed to the great ends of life.

30. Never be afraid of plagiarism, in appropriating virtues or ideas, but be sure you make them your own before you use them.

31. The faculties of the mind, like the muscles of the body, grow by exercise. The latter have a definite and limited capacity. It is the glory of the former, that they are to increase eternally. The cultivation of the memory, reason, judgment, understanding, &c., with love, benevolence, and all the affections, appropriately employed, will insensibly create a present immortality. No opportunity should be lost by writing, speaking, and reviewing your own or the best thoughts of others.

32. God's judgment, not man's, is always to be consulted in regard to the relative importance and value of things, both

temporal and spiritual. Habitually adopt his standard, renouncing man's.

33. There can be no greater, and yet surely there is no more common mistake even among some good people, than to consider that life a failure, which does not accumulate some earthly treasure. That life only is a failure, which fails of its destiny, Heaven. That approximating a failure is his to whom no "abundant entrance" is administered because of the unfaithful improvement of his one or more talents.

With infinite resources for improvement, it is obvious that every man, in every age, has the opportunity of becoming almost what he wills to be. Nor is it difficult to see that every generation has the means of improvement, which lay every one under ever-increasing obligation to improve upon every previous experiment.

34. Practical activity in the service of your Master is the last hint our limits will permit us to give. It is not more true that our bodies grow by nourishment, than that our minds and graces are increased and strengthened by exercise. Imitation of Christ's example is the only true method of growing in grace. Introspection and analysis will oftener cloud than clear the spiritual vision ; and it is contact with the outward world, in acts of benevolence, that Heaven has mostly ordained to be the highest means of self-culture. Glancing our eye in this direction, where and what are the arguments that press you to action ? Look at the condition of three worlds, that now strike as forcibly the retina of the eye of faith as of nature :

The three converging or diverging lines that connect you sympathetically and electrically with them, are moved at every throb of your beating heart. Before you is hell. You see its iron gates, its blackened walls,—obscurely through its ascending smoke, you see its lurid flames. Imagination that falters nowhere else, is here appalled, and starting back, refuses to pass the dreadful boundary. But God has revealed it ; the will commands it ; truth demands it ; she must survey the terrific, and telegraph the threatening doom. Your father, your mother, your brother, your sister, or your neigh-

bor is there, and you must see them. You feel the sting of that accusing look. You feel the piercing power of that self-reproach. You feel the agony of fixed despair. At every touch of conscience, you shake with fear, and tremble with remorse. Anger shoots her arrows of revenge. Hate poisons every nerve and vein of feeling. Selfishness cries for another minister of woe. It comes in unhallowed lust. Misery lifts the eyelids shame had closed, only to behold a raving rival. Despair hears one ceaseless sound. It is ETERNITY ! ETERNITY !! This, eternally,—*eternity, eternity, eternity!* A burning brimstone is now the incense of pride, the perfume of the damned. Rebellion reëchoes from every tower of idolatry, through every cavern of sin, and dies on the ocean of a wasteless gloom. Lost ! and *what is lost ?* peals eternally from the omniscience of memory. A history of love has become the fang that inserts the virus which feeds the flame of raging madness. Is hell less than this ? 't is more. Who dares to say it is less, when inspiration has exhausted phrase and figure, and then proclaims the fire unquenchable, the pit bottomless ! And this does not rouse you. Look again : There are they whom you knew unwarned on earth. Oh, Heaven ! why didst thou not reveal a fiercer flame ? Why not tell of other sorrows ? Why not wave over these slumbering sensibilities a redder flame of wrath ? for man will yet risk all these, and rush heedless on. But will you, professed disciple, hear this wail of woe, and see around you living columns of “bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh,” move on in fearful phalanx ; yea, see them with eyes of sense, as they reel and fall over the verge of the last precipice that hides them from your view, and yet require another voice than God's to arouse you to action ? Thou God of love ! could nothing short of this wake thy creature man from his deathlike slumber ! Keen, sagacious man, avoiding danger and loving happiness, even amidst the shattered fragments of his fallen greatness—must the smoking altar of the loved and lovely, after 6000 years, still call for victims, to vindicate God's faithfulness in warning—his justice in condemning ?